FISHIN' JIMMY

BY

ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON

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"I'm gettin' on now, I'm nigh seventy"

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ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON

FISHIN' JIMMY

I

IT WAS on the margin of Pond Brook, just back of Uncle Eben's, that I first saw Fishin' Jimmy. It was early June, and we were again at Franconia, that peaceful little village among the northern hills.

The boys, as usual, were tempting the trout with false fly or real worm, and I was roaming along the bank, seeking spring flowers, and hunting early butterflies and moths. Suddenly there was a little plash in the water at the spot where Ralph was fishing, the slender tip of his rod bent, I heard a voice cry out, "Strike

him, sonny, strike him!" and an old man came quickly but noiselessly through the bushes, just as Ralph's line flew up into space, with, alas! no shining, spotted trout upon the hook. The new comer was a spare, wiry man of middle height, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, a thin brown face, and scanty gray hair. He carried a fishing-rod, and had some small trout strung on a forked stick in one hand. A simple, homely figure, yet he stands out in memory just as I saw him then, no more to be forgotten than the granite hills, the rushing streams, the cascades of that north country I love so well.

We fell into talk at once, Ralph and Waldo rushing eagerly into questions about the fish, the bait, the best spots in the stream, advancing their own small theories, and asking advice from their new friend. For friend he seemed even

in that first hour, as he began simply, but so wisely, to teach my boys the art he loved. They are older now, and are no mean anglers, I believe; but they look back gratefully to those brookside lessons, and acknowledge gladly their obligations to Fishin' Jimmy. But it is not of these practical teachings I would now speak; rather of the lessons of simple faith, of unwearied patience, of self-denial and cheerful endurance, which the old man himself seemed to have learned, strangely enough, from the very sport so often called cruel and murderous. Incomprehensible as it may seem, to his simple intellect the fisherman's art was a whole system of morality, a guide for every-day life, an education, a gospel. It was all any poor mortal man, woman, or child, needed in this world to make him or her happy, useful, good.

At first we scarcely realized this, and

wondered greatly at certain things he said, and the tone in which he said them. I remember at that first meeting I asked him, rather carelessly, "Do you like fishing?" He did not reply at first; then he looked at me with those odd, limpid, green-gray eyes of his which always seemed to reflect the clear waters of mountain streams, and said very quietly: "You would n't ask me if I liked my mother—or my wife." And he always spoke of his pursuit as one speaks of something very dear, very sacred. Part of his story I learned from others, but most of it from himself, bit by bit, as we wandered together day by day in that lovely hill-country. As I tell it over again I seem to hear the rush of mountain streams, the "sound of a going in the tops of the trees," the sweet, pensive strain of white-throat sparrow, and the plash of leaping trout; to see

the crystal-clear waters pouring over granite rock, the wonderful purple light upon the mountains, the flash and glint of darting fish, the tender green of early summer in the north country.

Fishin' Jimmy's real name was James Whitcher. He was born in the Franconia Valley of northern New Hampshire, and his whole life had been passed there. He had always fished; he could not remember when or how he learned the art. From the days when, a tiny, bare-legged urchin in ragged frock, he had dropped his piece of string with its bent pin at the end into the narrow, shallow brooklet behind his father's house, through early boyhood's season of roaming along Gale River, wading Black Brook, rowing a leaky boat on Streeter or Mink Pond, through youth, through manhood, on and on into old age, his life had apparently been one long day's

fishing—an angler's holiday. Had it been only that? He had not cared for books, or school, and all efforts to tie him down to study were unavailing. But he knew well the books of running brooks. No dry botanical text-book or manual could have taught him all he now knew of plants and flowers and trees.

He did not call the yellow spatterdock Nuphar advena, but he knew its large leaves of rich green, where the black bass or pickerel sheltered themselves from the summer sun, and its yellow balls on stout stems, around which his line so often twined and twisted, or in which the hook caught, not to be jerked out till the long, green, juicy stalk itself, topped with globe of greenish gold, came up from its wet bed. He knew the sedges along the bank with their nodding tassels and stiff lance-like leaves,

the feathery grasses, the velvet moss upon the wet stones, the sea-green lichen on boulder or tree-trunk. There, in that corner of Echo Lake, grew the thickest patch of pipewort, with its small, round, grayish-white, mushroom-shaped tops on long, slender stems. If he had styled it Eriocaulon septangulare, would it have shown a closer knowledge of its habits than did his careful avoidance of its vicinity, his keeping line and flies at a safe distance, as he muttered to himself, "Them pesky butt'ns agin!" He knew by sight the bur-reed of mountain ponds, with its round, prickly balls strung like big beads on the stiff, erect stalks; the little water-lobelia, with tiny purple blossoms, springing from the waters of lake and pond. He knew, too, all the strange, beautiful under-water growth: bladderwort in long, feathery garlands, pellucid water-weed, quillwort in stiff little

bunches with sharp-pointed leaves of olive-green,—all so seldom seen save by the angler whose hooks draw up from time to time the wet, lovely tangle. I remember the amusement with which a certain well-known botanist, who had journeyed to the mountains in search of a little plant, found many years ago near Echo Lake, but not since seen, heard me propose to consult Fishin' Jimmy on the subject. But I was wiser than he knew. Jimmy looked at the specimen brought as an aid to identification. It was dry and flattened, and as unlike a living, growing plant as are generally the specimens from an herbarium. But it showed the awl-shaped leaves, and thread-like stalk with its tiny round seed-vessels, like those of our common shepherd's-purse, and Jimmy knew it at once. "There 's a dreffle lot o' that peppergrass out in deep water there,

jest where I ketched the big pick'ril," he said quietly. "I seen it nigh a foot high, an' it 's juicier and livin'er than them dead sticks in your book." At our request he accompanied the unbelieving botanist and myself to the spot; and there, looking down through the sunlit water, we saw great patches of that rare and long-lost plant of the Cruciferæ known to science as Subularia aquatica. For forty years it had hidden itself away, growing and blossoming and casting abroad its tiny seeds in its watery home, unseen, or at least unnoticed, by living soul, save by the keen, soft, limpid eyes of Fishin' Jimmy. And he knew the trees and shrubs so well: the alder and birch from which as a boy he cut his simple, pliant pole; the shad-blow and iron-wood (he called them, respectively, sugarplum and hard-hack) which he used for the more ambitious rods of maturer

years; the mooseberry, wayfaring-tree, hobble-bush, or triptoe,—it has all these names, with stout, trailing branches, over which he stumbled as he hurried through the woods and underbrush in the darkening twilight.

He had never heard of entomology. Guénée, Hübner, and Fabricius were unknown names; but he could have told these worthies many new things. Did they know just at what hour the trout ceased leaping at dark fly or moth, and could see only in the dim light the ghostly white miller? Did they know the comparative merits, as a tempting bait, of grasshopper, cricket, spider, or wasp; and could they, with bits of wool, tinsel, and feather, copy the real dipterous, hymenopterous, or orthopterous insect? And the birds: he knew them as do few ornithologists, by sight, by sound, by little ways and tricks of their

own, known only to themselves and him. The white-throat sparrow with its sweet, far-reaching chant; the hermit-thrush with its chime of bells in the calm summer twilight; the vesper-sparrow that ran before him as he crossed the meadow, or sang for hours, as he fished the stream, its unvarying, but scarcely monotonous little strain; the cedar-bird, with its smooth brown coat of Quaker simplicity, and speech as brief and simple as Quaker yea or nay; the winter-wren sending out his strange, lovely, liquid warble from the high, rocky side of Cannon Mountain; the bluebird of the early spring, so welcome to the winter-weary dwellers in that land of ice and snow, as he

> "From the bluer deeps
> Lets fall a quick, prophetic strain,"

of summer, of streams freed and flowing again, of waking, darting, eager fish, the

veery, the phoebe, the jay, the vireo,—all these were friends, familiar, tried, and true to Fishin' Jimmy. The cluck and coo of the cuckoo, the bubbling song of bobolink in buff and black, the watery trill of the stream-loving swamp-sparrow, the whispered whistle of the stealthy, darkness-haunting whippoorwill, the gurgle and gargle of the cow-bunting,—he knew each and all, better than did Audubon, Nuttall, or Wilson. But he never dreamed that even the tiniest of his little favorites bore, in the scientific world, far away from that quiet mountain nest, such names as Troglodytes hyemalis or Melospiza palustris. He could tell you, too, of strange, shy creatures rarely seen except by the early-rising, late-fishing angler, in quiet, lonesome places: the otter, muskrat, and mink of ponds and lakes,—rival fishers, who bore off prey sometimes from under

his very eyes,—field-mice in meadow and pasture, blind, burrowing moles, prickly hedge-hogs, brown hares, and social, curious squirrels.

Sometimes he saw deer, in the early morning or in the dusk of the evening, as they came to drink at the lake shore, and looked at him with big, soft eyes not unlike his own. Sometimes a shaggy bear trotted across his path and hid himself in the forest, or a sharp-eared fox ran barking through the bushes. He loved to tell of these things to us who cared to listen, and I still seem to hear his voice saying in hushed tones, after a story of woodland sight or sound: "Nobody don't see 'em but fishermen. Nobody don't hear 'em but fishermen."

II

BUT it was of another kind of knowledge he oftenest spoke, and of which I shall try to tell you, in his own words as nearly as possible.

First let me say that if there should seem to be the faintest tinge of irreverence in aught I write, I tell my story badly. There was no irreverence in Fishin' Jimmy. He possessed a deep and profound veneration for all things spiritual and heavenly; but it was the veneration of a little child, mingled as is that child's with perfect confidence and utter frankness. And he used the dialect of the country in which he lived.

"As I was tellin' ye," he said, "I allers loved fishin' an' knowed 't was the best

thing in the hull airth. I knowed it larnt ye more about creeters an' yarbs an' stuns an' water than books could tell ye. I knowed it made folks patienter an' commonsenser an' weather-wiser an' cuter gen'ally; gin 'em more fac'lty than all the school larnin' in creation. I knowed it was more fillin' than vittles, more rousin' than whisky, more soothin' than lodlum. I knowed it cooled ye off when ye was het, an' het ye when ye was cold. I knowed all that, o' course—any fool knows it. But—will ye b'l'eve it?—I was more 'n twenty-one year old, a man growed, 'fore I foun' out why 't was that away. Father an' mother was Christian folks, good out-an'-out Calv'nist Baptists from over East'n way. They fetched me up right, made me go to meetin' an' read a chapter every Sunday, an' say a hymn Sat'day night a'ter washin'; an' I useter say my prayers

mos' nights. I wa'n't a bad boy as boys go. But nobody thought o' tellin' me the one thing, jest the one single thing, that 'd ha' made all the diffunce. I knowed about God, an' how he made me an' made the airth, an' everythin', an' once I got thinkin' about that, an' I asked my father if God made the fishes. He said 'course he did, the sea an' all that in 'em is; but somehow that did n't seem to mean nothin' much to me, an' I lost my int'rist agin. An' I read the Scripter account o' Jonah an' the big fish, an' all that in Job about pullin' out levi'thing with a hook an' stickin' fish spears in his head, an' some parts in them queer books nigh the end o' the ole Test'ment about fish-ponds an' fish-gates an' fish-pools, an' how the fishers shall l'ment—everything I could pick out about fishin' an' sech; but it did n't come home to me; 't wa'n't my

kind o' fishin' an' I did n't seem ter sense it.

"But one day—it 's more 'n forty year ago now, but I rec'lect it same 's 't was yest'day, an' I shall rec'lect it forty thousand year from now if I 'm 'round, an' I guess I shall be—I heerd—suthin'—diffunt. I was down in the village one Sunday; it wa'n't very good fishin'—the streams was too full; an' I thought I 'd jest look into the meetin'-house 's I went by. 'T was the ole union meetin'-house, down to the corner, ye know, an' they had n't got no reg'lar s'pply, an' ye never knowed what sort ye 'd hear, so 't was kind o' excitin'.

"'T was late, 'most 'leven o'clock, an' the sarm'n had begun. There was a strange man a-preachin', some one from over to the hotel. I never heerd his name, I never seed him from that day to this; but I knowed his face. Queer

enough I 'd seed him a-fishin'. I never knowed he was a min'ster; he did n't look like one. He went about like a real fisherman, with ole clo'es an' an ole hat with hooks stuck in it, an' big rubber boots, an' he fished, reely fished, I mean—ketched 'em. I guess 't was that made me liss'n a leetle sharper 'n us'al, for I never seed a fishin' min'ster afore. Elder Jacks'n, he said 't was a sinf'l waste o' time, an' ole Parson Loomis, he 'd an idee it was cruel an' onmarciful; so I thought I 'd jest see what this man 'd preach about, an' I settled down to liss'n to the sarm'n.

"But there wa'n't no sarm'n; not what I 'd been raised to think was the on'y true kind. There wa'n't no heads, no fustlys nor sec'ndlys, nor fin'ly bruthrins, but the first thing I knowed I was hearin' a story, an' 't was a fishin' story. 'T was about Some One—I had n't the least

idee then who 't was, an' how much it all meant—Some One that was dreffle fond o' fishin' an' fishermen, Some One that sot everythin' by the water, an' useter go along by the lakes an' ponds, an' sail on 'em, an' talk with the men that was fishin'. An' how the fishermen all liked him, 'nd asked his 'dvice, an' done jest 's he telled 'em about the likeliest places to fish; an' how they allers ketched more for mindin' him; an' how when he was a-preachin' he would n't go into a big meetin'-house an' talk to rich folks all slicked up, but he 'd jest go out in a fishin' boat, an' ask the men to shove out a mite, an' he 'd talk to the folks on shore, the fishin' folks an' their wives an' the boys an' gals playin' on the shore. An' then, best o' everythin', he telled how when he was a-choosin' the men to go about with him an' help him an' larn his ways so 's to come a'ter

him, he fust o' all picked out the men he 'd seen every day fishin', an' mebbe fished with hisself; for he knowed 'em an' knowed he could trust 'em.

"An' then he telled us about the day when this preacher come along by the lake—a dreffle sightly place, this min'ster said; he 'd seed it hisself when he was trav'lin' in them countries—an' come acrost two men he knowed well; they was brothers, an' they was a-fishin'. An' he jest asked 'em in his pleasant-spoken, frien'ly way—there wa'n't never sech a drawin', takin', lovin' way with any one afore as this man had, the min'ster said—he jest asked 'em to come along with him; an' they lay down their poles an' their lines an' everythin', an' jined him. An' then he come along a spell further, an' he sees two boys out with their ole father, an' they was settin' in a boat an' fixin' up their tackle, an' he asked

'em if they 'd jine him, too, an' they jest dropped all their things, an' left the ole man with the boat an' the fish an' the bait an' follered the preacher. I don't tell it very good. I 've read it an' read it sence that; but I want to make ye see how it sounded to me, how I took it, as the min'ster telled it that summer day in Francony meetin'. Ye see I 'd no idee who the story was about, the man put it so plain, in common kind o' talk, without any come-to-passes an' whuffers an' thuffers, an' I never conceited 't was a Bible narr'tive.

"An' so fust thing I knowed I says to myself, 'That 's the kind o' teacher I want. If I could come acrost a man like that, I 'd jest foller him, too, through thick an' thin.' Well, I can't put the rest on it into talk very good; 't aint jest the kind o' thing to speak on 'fore folks, even sech good friends as you. I

aint the sort to go back on my word,—
—fishermen aint, ye know,—an' what I
'd said to myself 'fore I knowed who I
was bindin' myself to, I stuck to a'ter-
wards when I knowed all about him.
For 't aint for me to tell ye, who've got
so much more larnin' than me, that there
was a dreffle lot more to that story than
the fishin' part. That lovin', givin' up,
suff'rin', dyin' part, ye know it all yer-
self, an' I can't kinder say much on it,
'cept when I 'm jest all by myself, or—
'long o' him.

" That a'ternoon I took my ole Bible
that I had n't read much sence I growed
up, an' I went out into the woods 'long
the river, an' 'stid o' fishin' I jest sot
down an' read that hull story. Now ye
know it yerself by heart, an' ye 've
knowed it all yer born days, so ye can't
begin to tell how new an' 'stonishin' 't
was to me, an' how findin' so much fish-

in' in it kinder helped me unnerstan' an' b'l'eve it every mite, an' take it right hum to me to foller an' live up to 's long 's I live an' breathe. Did j'ever think on it, reely? I tell ye, his r'liging 's a fishin' r'liging all through. His friends was fishin' folks; his pulpit was a fishin' boat, or the shore o' the lake; he loved the ponds an' streams; an' when his d'sciples went out fishin', if he did n't go hisself with 'em, he 'd go a'ter 'em, walkin' on the water, to cheer 'em up an' comfort 'em.

"An' he was allers 'round the water; for the story 'll say, 'he come to the seashore,' or 'he begun to teach by the seaside,' or agin, 'he entered into a boat,' an' 'he was in the stern o' the boat, asleep.'

"An' he used fish in his mir'cles. He fed that crowd o' folks on fish when they was hungry, bought 'em from a little chap on the shore. I 've oft'n

thought how dreffle tickled that boy must 'a' ben to have him take them fish. Mebbe they wa'n't nothin' but shiners, but the fust the little feller 'd ever ketched; an' boys set a heap on their fust ketch. He was dreffle good to child'en, ye know. An' who 'd he come to a'ter he 'd died, an' ris agin? Why, he come down to the shore 'fore daylight, an' looked off over the pond to where his ole frien's was a-fishin'. Ye see they 'd gone out jest to quiet their minds an' keep up their sperrits; ther 's nothin' like fishin' for that, ye know, an' they 'd ben in a heap o' trubble. When they was settin' up the night afore, worryin' an' wond'rin' an' s'misin' what was goin' ter become on 'em without their master, Peter 'd got kinder desprit, an' he up an' says in his quick way, says he, 'Anyway, *I* 'm goin' a-fishin'.' An' they all see the sense on it, — any fisherman

would,—an' they says, says they, "We 'll go 'long too.' But they did n't ketch anythin'. I suppose they could n't fix their minds on it, an' everythin' went wrong like. But when mornin' come creepin' up over the mountings, fust thin' they knowed they see him on the bank, an' he called out to 'em to know if they'd ketched anythin'. The water jest run down my cheeks when I heerd the min'-ster tell that, an' it kinder makes my eyes wet every time I think on 't. For 't seems 's if it might 'a' ben me in that boat, who heern that v'ice I loved so dreffle well speak up agin so nat'ral from the bank there. An' he eat some o' their fish! O' course he done it to sot their minds easy, to show 'em he wa'n't quite a sperrit yit, but jest their own ole frien' who 'd ben out in the boat with 'em so many, many times. But seems to me, jest the fac' he done it kinder makes fish

an' fishin' diffunt from any other thing in the hull airth. I tell ye them four books that gin his story is chock full o' things that go right to the heart o' fishermen, —nets, an' hooks, an' boats, an' the shores, an' the sea, an' the mountings, Peter's fishin'-coat, lilies, an' sparrers, an' grass o' the fields, an' all about the evenin' sky bein' red or lowerin', an' fair or foul weather.

"It 's an out-doors, woodsy, country story, 'sides bein' the heav'nliest one that was ever telled. I read the hull Bible, as a duty ye know. I read the epis'les, but somehow they don't come home to me. Paul was a great man, a dreffle smart scholar, but he was raised in the city, I guess, an' when I go from the gospils into Paul's writin's it 's like goin' from the woods an' hills an' streams o' Francony into the streets of a big city like Concord or Manch'ster."

The old man did not say much of his after life and the fruits of this strange conversion, but his neighbors told us a great deal. They spoke of his unselfishness, his charity, his kindly deeds; told of his visiting the poor and unhappy, nursing the sick. They said the little children loved him, and every one in the village and for miles around trusted and leaned upon Fishin' Jimmy. He taught the boys to fish, sometimes the girls too; and while learning to cast and strike, to whip the stream, they drank in knowledge of higher things, and came to know and love Jimmy's "fishin' r'liging." I remember they told me of a little French Canadian girl, a poor, wretched waif, whose mother, an unknown tramp, had fallen dead in the road near the village. The child, an untamed little heathen, was found clinging to her mother's body in an agony of grief

and rage, and fought like a tiger when they tried to take her away. A boy in the little group attracted to the spot, ran away, with a child's faith in his old friend, to summon Fishin' Jimmy. He came quickly, lifted the little savage tenderly, and carried her away.

No one witnessed the taming process, but in a few days the pair were seen together on the margin of Black Brook, each with a fish-pole. Her dark face was bright with interest and excitement as she took her first lesson in the art of angling. She jabbered and chattered in her odd patois, he answered in broadest New England dialect, but the two quite understood each other, and though Jimmy said afterward that it was "dreffle to hear her call the fish pois'n," they were soon great friends and comrades. For weeks he kept and cared for the child, and when she left him for a good home

in Bethlehem, one would scarcely have recognized in the gentle, affectionate girl the wild creature of the past. Though often questioned as to the means used to effect this change, Jimmy's explanation seemed rather vague and unsatisfactory. "'T was fishin' done it," he said; "on'y fishin'; it allers works. The Christian r'liging itself had to begin with fishin', ye know."

III

BUT one thing troubled Fishin' Jimmy. He wanted to be a "fisher of men." That was what the Great Teacher had promised he would make the fishermen who left their boats to follow him. What strange, literal meaning he attached to the terms, we could not tell. In vain we—especially the boys, whose young hearts had gone out in warm affection to the old man—tried to show him that he was, by his efforts to do good and make others better and happier, fulfilling the Lord's directions. He could not understand it so. "I allers try to think," he said, "that 't was me in that boat when he come along. I make b'l'eve that it was out on Streeter Pond,

an' I was settin' in the boat, fixin' my lan'in' net, when I see him on the shore. I think mebbe I 'm that James—for that 's my given name, ye know, though they allers call me Jimmy—an' then I hear him callin' me 'James, James.' I can hear him jest 's plain sometimes, when the wind 's blowin' in the trees, an' I jest ache to up an' foller him. But says he, 'I 'll make ye a fisher o' men,' an' he aint done it. I 'm waitin'; mebbe he 'll larn me some day."

He was fond of all living creatures, merciful to all. But his love for our dog Dash became a passion, for Dash was an angler. Who that ever saw him sitting in the boat beside his master, watching with eager eye and whole body trembling with excitement the line as it was cast, the flies as they touched the surface—who can forget old Dash? His fierce excitement at rise of trout, the

efforts at self-restraint, the disappointment if the prey escaped, the wild exultation if it was captured, how plainly —he who runs might read—were shown these emotions in eye, in ear, in tail, in whole quivering body! What wonder that it all went straight to the fisher's heart of Jimmy! "I never knowed afore they could be Christians," he said, looking, with tears in his soft, keen eyes, at the every-day scene, and with no faintest thought of irreverence. "I never knowed it, but I'd give a stiffikit o' membership in the orthodoxest church goin' to that dog there."

It is almost needless to say that as years went on Jimmy came to know many "fishin' min'sters;" for there are many of that school who know our mountain country, and seek it yearly. All these knew and loved the old man. And there were others who had wan-

dered by that sea of Galilee, and fished in the waters of the Holy Land, and with them Fishin' Jimmy dearly loved to talk. But his wonder was never-ending that, in the scheme of evangelizing the world, more use was not made of the "fishin' side" of the story. "Haint they ever tried it on them poor heathen?" he would ask earnestly of some clerical angler casting a fly upon the clear water of pond or brook. "I should think 't would 'a' ben the fust thing they 'd done. Fishin' fust, an' r'liging 's sure to foller. An' it 's so easy; fur heath'n mostly r'sides on islands, don't they? So ther 's plenty o' water, an' o' course ther 's fishin'; an' oncet gin 'em poles an' git 'em to work, an' they 're out o' mischief fur that day. They 'd like it better 'n cannib'ling, or cuttin' out idles, or scratchin' picters all over theirselves, an' bimeby—not too

suddent, ye know, to scare 'em — ye could begin on that story, an' they could n't stan' that, not a heath'n on 'em. Won't ye speak to the 'Merican Board about it, an' sen' out a few fishin' mishneries, with poles an' lines an' tackle gen'ally? I 've tried it on dreffle bad folks, an' it allers done 'em good. But" —so almost all his simple talk ended— "I wish I could begin to be a fisher o' men. I 'm gettin' on now, I 'm nigh seventy, an' I aint got much time, ye see."

One afternoon in July there came over Franconia Notch one of those strangely sudden tempests which sometimes visit that mountain country. It had been warm that day, unusually warm for that refreshingly cool spot; but suddenly the sky grew dark and darker, almost to blackness, there was roll of thunder and flash of lightning, and then poured down

the rain—rain at first, but soon hail in large frozen bullets, which fiercely pelted any who ventured outdoors, rattled against the windows of the Profile House with sharp cracks like sounds of musketry, and lay upon the piazza in heaps like snow. And in the midst of the wild storm it was remembered that two boys, guests at the hotel, had gone up Mount Lafayette alone that day. They were young boys, unused to mountain climbing, and their friends were anxious. It was found that Dash had followed them; and just as some one was to be sent in search of them, a boy from the stables brought the information that Fishin' Jimmy had started up the mountain after them as the storm broke. "Said if he could n't be a fisher o' men, mebbe he knowed nuff to ketch boys," went on our informant, seeing nothing more in the speech, full of pa-

thetic meaning to us who knew him, than the idle talk of one whom many considered "lackin'." Jimmy was old now, and had of late grown very feeble, and we did not like to think of him out in that wild storm. And now suddenly the lost boys themselves appeared through the opening in the woods opposite the house, and ran in through the sleet, now falling more quietly. They were wet, but no worse apparently for their adventure, though full of contrition and distress at having lost sight of the dog. He had rushed off into the woods some hours before, after a rabbit or hedgehog, and had never returned. Nor had they seen Fishin' Jimmy.

As hours went by and the old man did not return, a search party was sent out, and guides familiar with the mountain paths went up Lafayette to seek for him. It was nearly night when they at

last found him, and the grand old mountains had put on those robes of royal purple which they sometimes assume at eventide. At the foot of a mass of rock, which looked like amethyst or wine-red agate in that marvellous evening light, the old man was lying, and Dash was with him. From the few faint words Jimmy could then gasp out, the truth was gathered. He had missed the boys, leaving the path by which they had returned, and while stumbling along in search of them, feeble and weary, he had heard far below a sound of distress. Looking down over a steep, rocky ledge, he had seen his friend and fishing comrade, old Dash, in sore trouble. Poor Dash! He never dreamed of harming his old friend, for he had a kind heart. But he was a sad coward in some matters, and a very baby when frightened and away from master and friends. So

I fear he may have assumed the rôle of wounded sufferer when in reality he was but scared and lonesome. He never owned this afterward, and you may be sure we never let him know, by word or look, the evil he had done. Jimmy saw him holding up one paw helplessly, and looking at him with wistful, imploring brown eyes, heard his pitiful whimpering cry for aid, and never doubted his great distress and peril. Was Dash not a fisherman? And fishermen, in Fishin' Jimmy's category, were always true and trusty. So the old man without a second's hesitation started down the steep, smooth decline to the rescue of his friend.

We do not know just how or where in that terrible descent he fell. To us who afterward saw the spot, and thought of the weak old man, chilled by the storm, exhausted by his exertions, and yet

clambering down that precipitous cliff, made more slippery and treacherous by the sleet and hail still falling, it seemed impossible that he could have kept a foothold for an instant. Nor am I sure that he expected to save himself, and Dash too. But he tried. He was sadly hurt. I will not tell you of that.

Looking out from the hotel windows through the gathering darkness, we who loved him—it was not a small group—saw a sorrowful sight. Flickering lights thrown by the lanterns of the guides came through the woods. Across the road, slowly, carefully, came strong men, bearing on a rough hastily made litter of boughs the dear old man. All that could have been done for the most distinguished guest, for the dearest, best-beloved friend, was done for the gentle fisherman. We, his friends, and proud to style ourselves thus, were of different,

widely separated lands, greatly varying creeds. Some were nearly as old as the dying man, some in the prime of manhood. There were youths and maidens and little children. But through the night we watched together. The old Roman bishop, whose calm, benign face we all know and love; the Churchman, ascetic in faith, but with the kindest, most indulgent heart when one finds it; the gentle old Quakeress with placid, unwrinkled brow and silvery hair; Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist,—we were all one that night. The old angler did not suffer—we were so glad of that! But he did not appear to know us, and his talk seemed strange. It rambled on quietly, softly, like one of his own mountain brooks, babbling of green fields, of sunny summer days, of his favorite sport, and ah! of other things. But he was not speaking to us. A sudden, awed

hush and thrill came over us as, bending to catch the low words, we all at once understood what only the bishop put into words as he said, half to himself, in a sudden, quick, broken whisper, "God bless the man, he 's talking to his Master!"

"Yes, sir, that 's so," went on the quiet voice; "'t was on'y a dog sure nuff; 'twa'n't even a boy, as ye say, an' ye ast me to be a fisher o' men. But I haint had no chance for that, somehow; mebbe I wa'n't fit for 't. I 'm on'y jest a poor old fisherman, Fishin' Jimmy, ye know, sir. Ye useter call me James—no one else ever done it. On'y a dog? But he wa'n't jest a common dog, sir; he was a fishin' dog. I never seed a man love fishin' mor 'n Dash." The dog was in the room, and heard his name. Stealing to the bedside, he put a cold nose into the cold hand of his old

friend, and no one had the heart to take him away. The touch turned the current of the old man's talk for a moment, and he was fishing again with his dog friend. "See 'em break, Dashy! See 'em break! Lots on 'em to-day, aint they? Keep still, there 's a good dog, while I put on a diffunt fly. Don't ye see they 're jumpin' at them gnats? Aint the water jest 'live with 'em? Aint it shinin' an' clear an'—" The voice faltered an instant, then went on: "Yes, sir, I 'm comin'—I 'm glad, dreffle glad to come. Don't mind 'bout my leavin' my fishin'; do ye think I care 'bout that? I 'll jest lay down my pole ahin' the alders here, an' put my lan'in' net on the stuns, with my flies an' tackle—the boys 'll like 'em, ye know—an' I 'll be right along.

"I mos' knowed ye was on'y a-tryin' me when ye said that 'bout how I had n't

been a fisher o' men, nor even boys, on'y a dog. 'T was a—fishin' dog—ye know—an' ye was allers dreffle good to fishermen,—dreffle good to—everybody; died—for 'em, did n't ye?—

"Please wait—on—the bank there, a minnit; I 'm comin' 'crost. Water 's pretty — cold this — spring — an' the stream 's risin'—but—I—can—do it;—don't ye mind—'bout me, sir. I 'll get acrost." Once more the voice ceased, and we thought we should not hear it again this side that stream.

But suddenly a strange light came over the thin face, the soft gray eyes opened wide, and he cried out, with the strong voice we had so often heard come ringing out to us across the mountain streams above the sound of their rushing: "Here I be, sir! It 's Fishin' Jimmy, ye know, from Francony way; him ye useter call James when ye come

'long the shore o' the pond an' I was a-fishin.' I heern ye agin, jest now—an' I—straightway—f'sook—my—nets—an' —follered—"

Had the voice ceased utterly? No, we could catch faint, low murmurs and the lips still moved. But the words were not for us; and we did not know when he reached the other bank.

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